

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
24 March 1984

SALVADOR - MOTLEY
WASHINGTON

The top administration official for Latin America said Saturday he believes the Salvadoran military will accept the outcome of the presidential elections despite concerns about two major candidates.

"They may as individuals like one candidate better than another but I think they're going to stand by the election results," Langhorne Motley of the State Department said.

Motley said there was a theory that if Roberto d'Aubuisson, the candidate of the far-right National Republican Alliance, wins the army will stage a coup because of concern Congress will cut off military aid.

D'Aubuisson is identified with rightist death squads and opposes many of the economic and political reforms Congress has made conditions of continued U.S. aid.

Motley, speaking on Cable News Network's "Saturday Newsmaker" program, said another theory is that the army would not permit Jose Napoleon Duarte, the candidate of the Christian Democrats, to serve because of "philosophical differences."

Duarte is a strong proponent of land redistribution and other reforms opposed by the wealthy business interests that have major influence on the Army.

"You can posture different possibilities of coups," Motley said. "All I am saying to you, in my assessment of the situation, I think the military there has come to the position they're out to protect the election process."

Motley, assistant secretary for Inter-American Affairs, avoided a direct answer to questions on aid to CIA-backed rebels fighting the leftist government of Nicaragua.

A mine outside a Nicaraguan port on Tuesday damaged a Soviet oil tanker, prompting a strong protest by the Kremlin.

But Motley, commenting on the incident, noted that Salvadoran guerrillas planted a mine on a runway at El Orajuelo last week, damaging a cargo plane hauling ballot boxes for Sunday's election.

"If it's within the capability of Salvadoran guerrillas to mine an airfield, then it is within the capability of Nicaraguan anti-Sandinista guerrillas to mine ports," Motley said.

"I don't know if they are American mines or not," he said.